ASSESSING PRESIDENTIAL BEHAVIOR IN ECONOMIC DOWNTURNS
AND ELECTION YEARS FROM 1961 THROUGH 1988

By

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A DISSERTATION PRESENTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL
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A sincere appreciation is extended to my wife Katherine and to my children Sara and Christopher for their continuous support and for having the patience to ignore me when my research did not proceed smoothly.

Lastly, I wish to acknowledge my deceased parents, Joseph and Teresa Smaha, whose love, support, and encouragement greatly contributed to making graduate school a reality for me.

My sincerest apologies to anyone I may have forgotten. Naturally, all errors are mine.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract of Dissertation Presented to the Graduate School
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This is a quantitative study of the American presi-
dency. The subjects are six presidents, John F. Kennedy
through Ronald W. Reagan. The author examines whether there
is evidence to support the political axiom that presidents
attempt to divert the nation's attention from economic
affairs to foreign affairs when the economy is performing
poorly. Two competing hypotheses are also presented and
tested.

Secondary research areas are whether presidents
increase the number of foreign affairs speeches given and
the number of days spent traveling abroad in a presidential
election year, and whether presidents increase their pursuit

of major foreign policy initiatives when the economy is performing poorly or during a presidential election year.

The results show that there was insufficient evidence to support the political axiom even though the competing hypotheses were not accepted. Neither did the evidence support the hypotheses in our secondary research areas. A new variable, economic saliency, which measures attitudes about the national economy, performed quite well. Economic saliency is highly influenced by changes in unemployment and inflation. In turn, presidential job approval is significantly influenced by economic saliency.

The evidence suggests that economic conditions (unemployment and inflation) are extremely important to the American public and that presidents would be wise to devote greater attention to economic affairs, rather than foreign affairs, when trying to enhance their popularity or electoral chances.

Note: contact author for revisions.

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Studies of the American presidency have largely been historical and anecdotal. Whether by political scientists or historians, most past studies of the presidency analyzed single administrations or, less common, compared performance in a particular area over several presidencies. These studies were rarely driven by theory, rarely invoked statistical analysis, and were often methodologically unsound. Many other works were simply biographical or autobiographical recollections of presidents and their administrations, hence subject to extreme bias.

In part, political scientists were hesitant to develop theories and apply quantitative research techniques to the study of presidential behavior because of the small number of cases available. Only forty-one men have held the office to date.[1]

Because of advances made in statistical techniques, the increasing amount of information available to scholars, the growth of the political behavior subfield, and efforts within the discipline to develop good theory, political scientists have more recently begun to advocate presidential

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[1]Forty-two presidents when Grover Cleveland is counted twice (1885-1889, 1893-1897).

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research which "may suggest statistical patterns across presidential terms" (King and Ragsdale 1988, 5). Primarily, this study is an attempt to discern whether patterns of behavior exist in some relationships between presidential action, economic performance, and presidential elections. Secondary issues will also be addressed.

It has often been suggested by scholars, politicians, and the media that when domestic economic conditions are poor, presidents will attempt to divert the nation's attention from economic matters to foreign affairs. This is an untested political axiom, but worth examining because of its broad acceptance within the population (especially among elites) and the insight it may provide regarding presidential behavior.

A poor economy causes social, economic, and political disruptions and spurs news stories which depict the plight of the middle and lower classes, the unemployed, and the homeless. These tragedies may affect the president's job approval rating, his re-election chances, and his party's success in congressional elections, because the electorate holds the chief executive responsible for poor economic conditions.

A decrease in presidential job approval may also weaken the president's ability to promote his agenda within Congress. The result may be a further erosion of the public's confidence in their chief executive and non-cooperation

between the executive and legislative branches. Presidents
may, therefore, attempt to shift attention from the economy
(a policy area difficult to control) to foreign affairs
(where events may be more easily manipulated) in expectation
that their job approval rating and their legislative effect-
iveness will be enhanced. This kind of behavior is analogous
to impression management or image control discussed in
social psychological literature (see Schlenker 1980).

A theory of presidential behavior can now be artic-
ulated. If the above generalizations are correct, then as
the economy deteriorates it should become a more salient
issue to the public. As a result, the president's job
approval rating (or popularity)[2] should decrease. We would
then expect the president to participate less frequently in
press conferences (where he may be questioned directly about
the ailing economy) so that he may avoid additional negative
publicity. Conversely, we would expect the president to
devote more attention to foreign affairs (a policy area in
which the executive dominates) and travel abroad more fre-
quently in an attempt to generate positive publicity for
himself and his administration. We now model this theory of
presidential behavior.

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[2]Throughout this paper presidential job approval and
presidential popularity are synonymous terms.

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                                        Press
                                        Conferences
                                        Decrease
                            Presidential
When the        Economic     Job          Foreign Affairs
Economy  ──→    Saliency ──→ Approval ──→ Speeches
Declines        Increases    Decreases    Increase

                                        Travel Abroad
                                        Increases
```
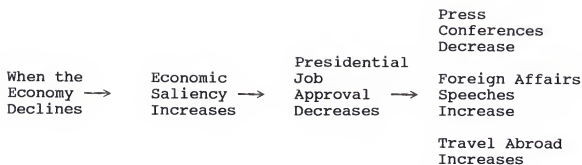
Figure 1. <u>Behavioral Model</u>

Two competing hypotheses are suggested from the dis-
cussion of the theory which deserve attention and testing.
First, some may argue that when economic conditions worsen
presidents will address the economy forthrightly rather than
avoid it. Therefore, a dependent variable which measures the
number of economic speeches given by the president will be
introduced into our model. Second, the number of foreign
affairs speeches given and the number of days spent travel-
ing abroad may increase when the United States is involved
in war. To test this competing hypothesis a variable which
measures the presence or absence of war will be introduced.

Two other areas of interest will also be addressed in
this study. One, do presidents give more foreign affairs
speeches and devote more time to foreign travel in a presi-
dential election year regardless of economic conditions? It
may be that presidents use the publicity which surrounds
these types of events as a method for improving their
standing (or that of their party's presidential nominee)
with the American public in order to enhance their electoral

chances. Two, do presidents increase their pursuit of major foreign policy initiatives in either economic downturns or presidential election years in order to increase their level of support with the American public? When the economy is performing poorly, presidents may announce a major foreign policy initiative in order to regain lost points in the popularity polls or to increase their standing (or that of their party's presidential nominee) in the polls during a presidential election year.

The reader should consider that a primary goal of this study is to determine whether statistical patterns of behavior exist over several presidencies. That is, do presidents behave similarly in specific situations? It is not the intent of the author to investigate patterns of behavior within singular presidencies. Similarly, controlling for the party of the president would yield too few cases to generalize from.[3] We now turn to a review of some major literature regarding the American presidency.

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[3]We are studying the behavior of three Democratic presidents and three Republican presidents.

CHAPTER II
PREVIOUS RESEARCH ON SELECTED ASPECTS
OF PRESIDENTIAL BEHAVIOR

A large body of research has been published which sug-
gests the existence of a relationship between the economy
and (1) presidential job approval, (2) the electoral chances
of the president, (3) the electoral chances of the presi-
dent's party in congressional elections, and (4) the presi-
dent's ability to promote policy within Congress. Each of
these relationships will now be discussed.

Presidential Job Approval

It is commonly believed that an economy which is per-
forming poorly will have a negative effect upon the job
approval rating of the president. And while "political
scientists have concentrated on inflation, unemployment, and
income as the major factors affecting economic voting and
presidential popularity" (Lanoue 1988, 42), disagreement
exists as to which economic indicators influence the
public's evaluation of presidential job performance. Dis-
agreement also exists concerning the measurement of these
variables and whether lagging should be incorporated. These
latter issues will be addressed in the methodology chapter.

Economic variables are not the only ones that have an effect upon presidential popularity. Many researchers would agree that contextual effects such as personality, political and personal scandals, and military conflicts, among others, play an important role (see, for example, Kenski 1977, Norpoth 1984, and Kenney and Rice 1988). For our purposes we are only concerned with economic effects.

In an early study Frey and Schneider (1978) found that unemployment, inflation, and disposable income were important indicators or measures for the public when they evaluated presidential job performance:

> A one percentage point increase in the rate of inflation decreases presidential popularity by one half to one percentage point; an increase in unemployment of one percentage point decreases popularity by somewhat more than four percentage points; and a one percentage point increase in the growth rate of nominal consumption increases presidential popularity by about seven-tenths of a percentage point. (Frey and Schneider 1978, 177-178)

Monroe (1978) confirmed the significance of the lagged effects of inflation on popularity and found a lagged effect for military expenditures as well. The significance of military expenditures is intuitively appealing because defense spending has often been a "hot" campaign issue in presidential elections (i.e., 1980, 1988) and because of the impact that the level of military expenditures has on domestic economic performance. Interestingly, Monroe found no effects for either unemployment or real personal income.

Unemployment also proved unfruitful in Kernell's (1978) study; however, consumer prices (inflation) did demonstrate levels of significance. Consumer prices were also significant in Fiorina's (1981) research and his results suggest that unemployment does in fact affect presidential popularity. The research conducted by Shapiro and Conforto (1980a) also confirmed the importance of consumer prices and unemployment:

> We found that changes in consumer prices and the percentage of the work force unemployed affect the public's perception and evaluation of economic conditions, and that this popular assessment in turn affects disapproval of presidential performance. (Shapiro and Conforto 1980a, 65)

Shapiro and Conforto found no similar effect for real disposable personal income (also see Kenski 1980, and Shapiro and Conforto 1980b, for a commentary and reply).

Inflation (lagged one quarter) was found by Norpoth (1984) to significantly influence presidential approval ratings; however, no strong effect was found for unemployment. In his study of economic conditions, presidential popularity, and their effects on midterm congressional elections, Abramowitz reported that:

> In 1982, an election year in which economic issues were very salient, both personal financial outlook and national economic outlook had significant effects on evaluations of President Reagan. However, of the four economic variables, expectations regarding the future of the national economy had by far the strongest impact on Reagan evaluations. (Abramowitz 1985, 37)

This negative evaluation of President Reagan led to significant losses for Republican incumbents who were seeking re-election to the U.S. House of Representatives. Economic conditions and their effects on presidential and congressional elections will be addressed later.

By combining inflation and unemployment into a "misery index" Ostrom and Simon (1985) found a significant and consistent impact upon popular support for the president. Brace and Hinckley (1991) also used the misery index in their research and found that it worked "to reduce presidential approval across administrations with an effect statistically significant at the .01 level" (p.1003). It is not clear, however, whether voters actually perceive these two economic indicators in the combined manner that Ostrom and Simon and Brace and Hinckley have presented them.

Kenney and Rice (1988) note that the most common economic indicators used by political scientists are unemployment, inflation, personal income, and gross national product. In their study of presidential rankings Kenney and Rice reported that "an improving economy can contribute to a high greatness rating" by scholars (p.165). Their measure of a healthy economy was the average annual change in per capita exports. This measure was chosen because most of the economic indicators used today were not in use during the terms of our earliest presidents.

Some scholars disagree with the assertion that the economy affects presidential popularity. Stimson (1976) argues that presidential popularity rides an up and down cycle and is independent from presidential behavior. His model predicts a high approval rating at the beginning of the president's term, followed by a long, significant decline, with a small rally at the close of the term--but never attaining the original level.

Brace and Hinckley (1991) also found that presidential popularity rides an up and down cycle and that it is artificially inflated at the beginning of each new term. However, as previously noted, their findings show that presidential popularity is affected by economic conditions (i.e., the misery index). Brace and Hinckley contradict Stimson by demonstrating that presidential evaluations are rooted in real events and conditions rather than just time.

The presidency of Ronald Reagan has also confounded Stimson's theory. The mean approval rating for Reagan during the first quarter of 1981 was 55.3 percent. It dropped to a low of 38 percent during the first quarter of 1983 and rebounded to 60 percent in the fourth quarter of 1984 (the end of Reagan's first term). Similarly, during the first quarter of 1985, Reagan's mean approval rating was 60.5 percent. It dropped to a low of 46 percent in the first

quarter of 1987 and rebounded to 57 percent in the fourth
quarter of 1988 (the end of Reagan's second term).[1]

The strong increases at the close of President Reagan's
two terms may be atypical, but they should not be dismissed
as aberrant since Stimson evaluated the terms of only five
presidents and the total number of men who have occupied the
office is relatively small.

Presidential Elections

That economic performance during a presidential elec-
tion year is an important issue for candidates and voters
should not be surprising. Research has shown that a variety
of economic variables may be important to voters when they
elect their chief executive in November.

Fair (1978) developed an equation for predicting the
Democratic share of the two-party vote for president. The
data he examined spanned presidential elections from 1916-
1976. His tests of three economic variables--the unemploy-
ment rate, the growth rate of real GNP (gross national
product) per capita, and the growth rate of the GNP
deflator--demonstrated that, in an election year, the unem-
ployment rate and the growth rate of real GNP per capita
"have an important effect on votes for president," though
the latter performed slightly better (p.171). In his update

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[1]All figures were calculated by the author from data
presented in Edwards with Gallup (1990).

which included results from 1980, Fair (1982) found that
"the two main factors contributing to the low predicted vote
for Carter were the low growth rate (-4.9%) and the high
inflation rate (8.7%)" (p.322). And when the 1984 figures
were incorporated his equation still performed quite well:

> The growth rate coefficient is .0102, which means
> that every one percentage point increase in the
> growth rate leads to a 1.02 percentage point
> increase in the vote share for the incumbent
> party. The inflation rate coefficient is -.0034,
> which means that every one percentage point
> increase in the inflation rate leads to a 0.34
> percentage point fall in the vote share for the
> incumbent party. (Fair 1988, 170)

Again, it was the growth rate in real GNP per capita
that had the strongest effect upon the popular vote. The
effects of inflation were negligible.

In his evaluation of ten presidential elections between
1948 and 1984 Erikson (1989) reported that the "cumulative
weighted average of annual percentage change in per capita
disposable income over the previous four years" was the best
predictor of the outcome (p.568). Furthermore, "the vote is
determined almost entirely by the amount of prosperity that
the incumbent party delivers" (p.568). Erikson is cautious,
however, and reminds his audience that both candidate qual-
ity and campaign effectiveness are just as important and
should not be discounted. That is, economic factors are not
the sole determinants of voter choice.

Markus (1988), too, found that personal income plays an
important role in voter choice. In his study of National

Election Studies survey data (1956-1984) Markus discovered that:

> Each 1 percent real increase in per capita disposable income increases the probability of a pro-incumbent vote by .023 (+- .004), net. Moreover, since objective national economic conditions are identical for every voter in a given election, that effect translates into a 2.3 percentage point change in the incumbent's share of the two-party vote for each 1 percent change in real PDI. (Markus 1988, 151)

As previously discussed a poor economy may affect the job approval rating of presidents. As a result, presidential job approval may be a good predictor of presidential elections. Sigelman (1979) found, for those elections he analyzed,[2]

> . . . a clearcut positive relationship between presidential popularity and the percentage of the popular vote won by the incumbent president in the seven elections since 1940. The correlation between presidential popularity and election outcomes is +.737, which indicates a very substantial relationship. (Sigelman 1979, 533)

Additionally, Sigelman found that "an incumbent whose last preelection popularity figure is 45 percent or less can expect to lose or to eke out the narrowest of victories in the popular vote column" (p.534).

Lewis-Beck and Rice (1982) expanded upon the work of Sigelman and reported that the popularity figure in June preceding the November election is a better predictor of the

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[2]Election years: 1940, 1944, 1948, 1956, 1964, 1972, and 1976.

popular vote. Their model reduced the average predictive
error and was wrong only for Harry Truman (1948).

Presidents have long known that a poor economy can lead
to defeat on election day. Are you better off now than you
were four years ago? has become a common campaign slogan.
Tufte (1978) has shown that presidents will attempt to
stimulate the economy in election years by increasing real
income through transfer payments such as old age, survivors,
disability, and health insurance benefits, and veterans'
benefits. Furthermore, Tufte believes that administrations
will pursue policies which will decrease unemployment or
inflation and postpone the closing of military bases and
veterans' hospitals.

Oppenheimer (1980) disagrees that these short-term
increases in transfer payments stimulate the economy. He
does concede, however, that politicians believe that these
transfer payments affect their electoral chances. This is a
crucial factor when trying to understand the relationship
between presidents, the economy, and elections. Presidents
believe that if the economy is not strong or steadily
improving before election day, their chances for victory
will be diminished. The following will demonstrate the
importance presidents and presidential candidates place on
strong economic performance during an election year.

Vice President Richard Nixon, who sought the presidency in 1960, fully understood the role economics would play in the campaign:

> And as the national economy began to turn upward in the winter and spring of 1959, the Administration's standing rose accordingly--and along with it, the personal stock of all of us associated with it. (Nixon 1962, 303)

Nixon was warned by economist Arthur Burns that the economy would dip shortly before the November 1960 election. However, the Eisenhower administration chose to stay the course. Nixon reflected:

> Unfortunately, Arthur Burns turned out to be a good prophet. The bottom of the 1960 dip did come in October and the economy started to move up again in November--after it was too late to affect the election returns. In October, usually a month of rising employment, the jobless rolls increased by 452,000. All the speeches, television broadcasts and precinct work in the world could not counteract that one hard fact. (Nixon 1962, 310-311)

When the economy remained sluggish during the 1976 presidential campaign Jimmy Carter pounded away at the Ford administration's failure to turn it around (see Witcover 1977). President Ford was warned that the economic recovery would stall shortly before the election and that something had to be done to stimulate the economy or there would be political repercussions. Even though the polls showed that uncertainty about the economy was hurting his campaign President Ford decided not to alter course. Ford later recalled, "I decided to gamble instead that the pause

wouldn't hit until after election day. . . . I lost" (Ford 1979, 429).

And again, during the presidential race of 1992, the economy would be the focus of the campaign. For James Carville, Bill Clinton's chief political strategist, one issue stood out:

> THE ECONOMY, STUPID, read the sign he posted to remind everyone that nothing else was more important in their daily war games. (Newsweek 1992, 78)

Congressional Elections

Some research has demonstrated that economic conditions may directly affect the outcome of congressional elections--especially elections involving members of the president's party. Indirect affects have also been shown to exist through the public's evaluation of the president's job performance. It is commonly known that senators and congressmen often distance themselves from the president during presidential and congressional campaigns when the economy is performing poorly or when presidential job approval is low.

Kramer (1971), in his evaluation of votes for candidates for the U.S. House of Representatives between 1896 and 1964, found that:

> Economic fluctuations, in particular, are important influences on congressional elections, with economic upturn helping the congressional candidates of the incumbent party, and economic decline benefitting the opposition. In quantitative terms, a 10% decrease in per capita real personal income

would cost the incumbent administration 4 or 5 percent of the congressional vote, other things being equal. With a "swing ratio" of 2, this would translate into a loss of around 40 House seats--a respectable shift. (Kramer 1971, 140-141)

Kramer found no effects for either unemployment or inflation.

Tufte (1978) reported results similar to Kramer's. Tufte also believes that midterm congressional elections are "a referendum on the performance of the president and his administration's management of the economy" (p.115). He found that:

An election-year change of 1.0 percent in real disposable income has typically produced a change of 1.1 percent in the national vote for congressional candidates of the in-party. . . . the difference between a mediocre and a buoyant election-year economy has counted for shifts of three or four percentage points in the vote, which translates into an equivalent swing of 25 to 45 House seats. (Tufte 1978, 119)

With changes in real disposable per capita income as their prime economic indicator, Hibbing and Alford (1981) discovered that the economy had a smaller impact on congressional elections than what Kramer and Tufte had discerned. Hibbing and Alford show that "changes in the economy have significant effects on the electoral fortunes of only a relatively small subset of congressmen--specifically, incumbents of the president's party" (p.434).

Not all research has been supportive of the hypothesis that economic conditions affect congressional elections. For example, Fiorina (1978), when using individual-level data

from responses to survey questions which asked if respond-
ents' financial situation was getting better, worse, or
stayed the same, found "little support for the traditional
view that midterm elections constitute a referendum on the
incumbent administration's handling of the economy" and that
there was "no evidence that perceptions of the state of the
country's economy and/or its personal impact on people had
any relation to their congressional vote" (pp.435, 438).
Fiorina suggests that voters are probably reacting to issues
other than the economy when deciding whom to vote for in
congressional elections and that voters probably blame the
president, not members of Congress, for poor economic con-
ditions.

Erikson (1989) confirmed Fiorina's findings. Using per
capita income growth as his measure, Erikson found that "the
same electorate that votes its collective pocketbook for
president virtually ignores the economy when voting for Con-
gress" (p.397).

Besides effects from the state of the economy, research
demonstrates that congressional elections can be affected by
the job approval ratings of the president. Kernell (1977)
reports that for every nine-point change in presidential job
approval the share of the vote for the president's party in
congressional elections will change 1.3 or 1.4 percentage
points (depending upon the party). In his study of midterm
congressional elections Campbell (1985) discovered that seat

losses for the president's party are partially associated
with the president's job approval rating:

> . . . seat losses tend to be greater when the
> President is unpopular at the midterm. For every
> additional percentage point favorable to the
> President in the midterm Gallup poll, one can
> expect the President's party to save about one
> seat. (Campbell 1985, 1155)

In a study of the midterm congressional elections of
1974, 1978, and 1982, Abramowitz (1985) in part concluded
that "economic conditions may have indirectly affected the
vote through their effects on presidential evaluations"
(p.37). The effects of economic conditions were strongest in
1982:

> . . . President Reagan's relatively low public
> evaluation appears to have reduced the Republican
> share of the popular vote by about 2.5 percentage
> points compared with what would be expected in a
> "normal" midterm election. (Abramowitz 1985, 41)

Leading Congress

Intuitively, it seems logical that if a president is
not popular with the American public (as measured by
national opinion polls) he will have difficulty getting his
legislative agenda through Congress. What member of Congress
wants to be associated with the policies of an unpopular
chief executive? Surprisingly, the research yields mixed
results.

Rivers and Rose (1985) focused their research on the
size of the president's legislative agenda--the annual
number of requests for action. Their findings show that

"a 1 percent increase in a president's public support level increases the president's legislative approval rate by approximately 1 percent (holding program size fixed)" (p.183).

Rohde and Simon (1985) studied presidential vetoes from 1945-1980. In part, they reviewed the public standing of the president (as measured by Gallup surveys) and congressional support on roll call votes. Regarding congressional attempts to override a presidential veto, Rohde and Simon report that "public support is a significant influence on both the probability of an override attempt and the probability that the attempt will be successful" (p.424).

As previously mentioned not all research supports the hypothesis that decreases in presidential popularity lead to decreases in congressional support. Bond and Fleisher (1984) examined a sample of House and Senate roll call votes on which the president took a position from 1957-1980. Their dependent variable was presidential success in Congress[3] and the independent variable was the percentage approving the president's job performance as measured by Gallup surveys. Their findings demonstrate that there are "very few instances when the President's popularity with the public is even moderately related to his influence in Congress"

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[3]Bond and Fleisher tested two measures of presidential success in Congress: one, presidential wins and losses on roll call votes and two, the percentage of support the president received on each roll call vote.

(p.303). In their conclusion, Bond and Fleisher state that
we should not be surprised by this finding. They suggest
that Neustadt (1986) might have been right--that it is the
president's ability to persuade, bargain, and compromise in
his relationships with Congress which matters most.

In a similar study Zeidenstein (1985) reversed the
variables to examine whether legislative success affects
presidential popularity. The dependent variable was presi-
dential popularity and the independent variable was key vote
wins and losses for the president in Congress. Zeidenstein
reported that:

> . . . Presidential popularity on a given date has
> no greater influence over whether a president wins
> or loses subsequent key votes than a key vote win
> or loss has influence in changing a president's
> popularity after the vote. In both cases, the
> relationships range from weak to non-existent for
> most administrations in both the House and Senate.
> It appears that whether a president is an able
> legislative leader does not directly affect his
> popularity, and his popularity does not directly
> affect his legislative leadership. (Zeidenstein
> 1985, 294)

Zeidenstein's findings may not be unexpected. Political
scientists generally agree that the public is not well-
informed on political matters. If this is an accurate
assessment, then we would not expect that congressional vote
outcomes would influence the public's evaluations of the
president's job performance.

If a poor economy causes presidential popularity to
decline or leads to electoral defeats or an inability to
lead Congress, do presidents then attempt to use foreign

affairs and travel abroad to improve their standing with the public and Congress? And, do the frequencies of presidential speechmaking and presidential press conferences change?

Foreign Affairs and Travel Abroad

By examining Gallup survey results before and after major international events Lee (1977) found that a relationship exists between these kinds of events and the president's popularity. Lee reports that a majority of the public will usually support presidential action in foreign affairs at its inception (rally 'round the flag), but that public support is often short-lived.

In consonance with our theory, Ostrom and Job (1986), in their study of the political use of force, concluded that "the president is more prone to use force in times of economic stress" (p.557). Could this be an attempt by the president to increase his standing with the country? This may be, since they also reported that:

> . . . the higher the level of presidential approval, the more likely the president will be concerned with the possibility that the use of force, if unsuccessful, could reduce his personal resources. (Ostrom and Job 1986, 557)

That war affects the president's popularity ratings and his reputation should not be surprising. This relationship is suggested in a study of presidential greatness rankings (Kenney and Rice 1988). Kenney and Rice reported that "involvement in war will move a president up 11 places in

the rankings on average" (p.165). War can also negatively affect presidential popularity--especially when casualties begin to mount (see Mueller 1973).

Foreign travel may also be a method for improving presidential popularity. Darcy and Richman (1988) believe that "travel abroad is seen by many as a device Presidents can use to gain favorable attention, thereby influencing their popular standing" (p.85). They examined Gallup survey data before and after such events (1953-1980) and found that foreign travel (especially longer trips) had a significant influence on presidential popularity, but, generally, only for Republicans. Unfortunately, Darcy and Richman offered no explanation for this anomaly.

If foreign travel improves a president's standing then we would expect presidents to take more trips. Interestingly, there may be no increasing trend to take more of them. Simon and Ostrom (1989) examined presidential travel from 1953-1987 and reported that "on average, the president can be expected to take two or three foreign trips per year" (p.71). Furthermore, they found that foreign travel must be accompanied by a significant event before it impacts on presidential job approval.

Some international events and foreign trips may have significant short-term effects upon presidential popularity. If an approval-enhancing event closely preceded an election it could alter the predicted outcome.

Speeches and Press Conferences

Our theory states, in part, that when the economy is performing poorly the president will devote more attention to foreign affairs in his speeches and decrease the frequency of press conferences. Research on presidential speechmaking and press conferences has produced mixed findings.

Ragsdale (1984) developed an equation for predicting when a president would give a major speech. Her definition of "major speech" is a presidential address given before a live television or radio audience. The data base included speeches from 1949-1980. Contrary to our theory Ragsdale found that "as the unemployment situation worsens, presidents are less likely to deliver a major address" and that "presidents appear to be more likely to address the nation when troops are being removed and the foreign conflict is presumably winding down" (pp.976-977).

The reader should note that the set of speeches used in the present study is significantly larger than the set used by Ragsdale because we include speeches which were not given live before a television or radio audience. Consequently, our research may yield different results (see methodology chapter).

Simon and Ostrom (1989) found no evidence that speechmaking is on the rise. In fact, they report that "presidential use of television has declined since the Johnson and

Nixon administrations" (p.71). Their findings also demon-
strated that speeches by themselves did not enhance presi-
dential support, but they did when "given in conjunction
with a trip and an approval-enhancing event" (p.74). On
average the increase in presidential approval was 4.17
rating points (Simon and Ostrom 1989, 74).

Contrary to Ragsdale (1984), Simon and Ostrom (1989)
believe that "it is the event rather than the speech that is
responsible for triggering the rally effect" (p.79). Their
findings give support to the theory that presidents may seek
a foreign policy success or engage in foreign travel for the
purpose of improving presidential popularity.

In a study of presidential press conferences Lammers
(1981) found that foreign policy difficulties led to a
decrease in the number of press conferences held. And, in
contradiction to our theory, he reported that:

> Despite their periodic denials, presidents do seem
> to read the polls as they schedule [press] con-
> ferences--but more often to increase rather than
> decrease [press] conference frequency as their
> popularity falls. (Lammers 1981, 270)

The reader should note that research in this area is
scant,[4] although the findings by Lammers should not be
dismissed and our research may yield different results.

Some research has demonstrated that poor economic con-
ditions may negatively affect the president's popularity,

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[4]For a short, nonquantitative history and assessment of
presidential press conferences, see Smith (1990).

his electoral chances, his party's chances in congressional elections, and his ability to lead Congress. Major international events, speeches, and foreign travel may help the president improve his standing with the public. These aspects of presidential behavior have not been brought together under the umbrella of one study, nor have some of the aforementioned studies included the more recent presidents, nor has our theory been previously tested.

In the following chapter we will specifically develop the hypotheses, operationalize the variables, and discuss the method of analysis.

CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY

This is a quasi-experimental design in which the sub-
jects are six United States presidents, John F. Kennedy
(1961) through Ronald W. Reagan (1988).[1] We begin with
Kennedy because his administration was the first to televise
press conferences on a regular basis and the number of
households with televisions surpassed the 90 percent mark at
roughly the same time that he took office (see chapters 3
and 4 in Kernell 1986). This is an important distinction
because press conferences now became national media events
and a method for presidents to communicate directly and
immediately with a very large proportion of the public.

The data end with the Reagan administration because
complete information for several variables was not available
for the term during which George Bush was president. Infor-
mation for all variables in this study is complete for all
quarters unless otherwise noted.

To reiterate, our theory states that as the economy
worsens it becomes a more salient issue to the public. As a
result, the president's job approval will go down. In

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[1]Though Reagan continued to serve as president through
the first three weeks of January 1989, data for the first
quarter of 1989 are omitted.

response, the president will give fewer press conferences and try to divert the nation's attention from domestic to foreign affairs by (1) giving more speeches which concern foreign affairs and (2) traveling abroad more frequently.

Nine independent variables which measure economic performance are incorporated. Economic saliency and presidential job approval are intervening variables and both measure responses to survey questions. The number of press conferences held, the number of foreign affairs speeches given, and the number of days spent traveling abroad are all dependent variables.

The first step entails the regression of economic saliency on our nine economic measures. Monetary variables are standardized in 1987 dollars.[2] The following will describe each variable, its code, and source.

Economic saliency (ECSAL) is defined as the mean quarterly percent of those who cited an economic problem in response to the survey question "What do you think is the most important problem facing the [this] country today?" An economic problem is defined as: cost of living, inflation, taxes, unemployment, balanced budget, depression, recession, interest rates, and the trade deficit, among others. These are broad, national economic problems which concern citizens as opposed to specific social problems such as welfare or

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[2]Standardization adjusts for inflation.

poverty, even though the latter surely have economic reper-
cussions.

Responses to the surveys were assigned to the quarters
in which the interviews occurred. Results from interviews
which spanned two quarters were discarded since we could not
determine which quarter to assign them to. Responses to var-
iations of the question were not included, nor were
responses which were not from surveys of the general popu-
lation.[3] This survey question has been asked irregularly by
the major polling organizations. Of the 112 quarters in the
data base, 54 show missing data for this variable (for a
loss of 48 percent). The mean quarterly figure can exceed
100 percent due to multiple responses.

Source: most of the data are from responses to Gallup
surveys (Gallup Organization, no date). Data for eight
quarters[4] are from responses to surveys conducted by CBS
News/New York Times (Staff, New York Times, no date).

Nine independent variables which measure economic
performance have been chosen. The first two, unemployment
and inflation, have often been used by scholars in similar
studies (see review of literature) and certainly affect

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[3]Some of the original data were from surveys of selected
subgroups, rather than the general population, and were not
included in our data set.

[4]Quarter/year: 2/1981, 3/1981, 2/1986, 4/1986, 1/1987,
4/1987, 2/1988, and 3/1988.

personal economic well-being. They also receive much media attention.

1. The unemployment rate (UNEMP) is a measure of those who have been unemployed fifteen weeks or longer as a percent of the total work force. This is a quarterly figure for all workers, 16 years of age or older, and it is seasonally adjusted.

Source: Citibase (1978).[5]

2. The inflation rate (INFL) is the mean quarterly percent rate of change in the Consumer Price Index (CPI). The CPI is a monthly measure of the cost of a hypothetical basket of goods for all urban consumers, for all items, and is seasonally adjusted. The base period is 1982-84 = 100.[6]

Source: for the CPI, Citibase (1978); see footnote 5. The percent rates of change were calculated by the author using a statistical program.[7]

The third economic indicator chosen is the prime lending rate. Though not often used in similar studies, it is included here because of the impact the rate has on the

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[5]The primary source for this and other economic variables is the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, but it is cited in the text and bibliography as Citibase because this is the data file from which the figures were generated. Though the copyright date is 1978 the data available surpass that year.

[6]The CPI has not yet been calculated with a base year beyond 1982-84.

[7]The author used Minitab, Release 8, for the personal computer. Minitab is a registered trademark of Minitab, Inc., State College, PA.

purchase of large consumer goods such as automobiles, boats, housing, and real estate, and on credit card interest rates. It, too, receives a great amount of media attention.

3. The prime lending rate (PRIME) is the rate of interest charged by banks on short-term business loans to their best corporate customers, per annum. The data are recorded on a mean quarterly basis.

Source: Citibase (1978); see footnote 5.

Our next economic indicators are per capita real disposable income, per capita gross national product, and per capita national defense expenditures. Even if the average citizen is not familiar with the meaning or interpretation of these three indicators, most will perceive the repercussions when these indicators change significantly. Change in real disposable income affects the purchasing level of individuals and families. Significant decreases in the levels of GNP and national defense expenditures can lead to a sluggish economy--even recession. These economic declines can be devastating to industries, communities, and families. It is not clear from prior research (see review of literature), however, whether it is the levels or the percent rates of change in these three variables which is more significant. Therefore, both the levels and the percent rates of change will be tested (thereby creating three additional variables).

Data for real disposable income are available on a per capita basis. It was necessary to calculate the per capita figures for gross national product and national defense expenditures. This was done by dividing the quarterly figure for each variable by the current estimate of the population of the United States.[8]

4. Per capita real disposable income (INC) is the quarterly measure of the average worker's real disposable income. Real disposable income is defined as personal income less personal taxes. Personal taxes are comprised of income, property, and inheritance taxes (see McConnell 1975, 182). The quarterly figure in 1987 dollars, annual rate, is recorded.

Source: Datadisk (1984).[9]

5. Per capita gross national product (GNP) is the quarterly measure of the productivity of the nation (gross national product) divided by the current population estimate. This figure is recorded in 1987 dollars.

Source: Citibase (1978); see footnote 5.

6. Per capita national defense expenditures (DEF) is the quarterly measure of national defense expenditures by

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[8]Population figures for 1967 through 1988 are from the Bureau of the Census and reproduced from a data file (Data Resources, Inc.). Figures for 1961 through 1966 are from U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census (1979).

[9]Even though the copyright date is 1984 the data available surpass that year.

the federal government in 1987 dollars divided by the cur-
rent population estimate.

Source: the data for 1972 through 1988 are from U.S.
Department of Commerce (1992, Table 3.11, 118-119). There
are no data for defense expenditures in 1987 dollars prior
to 1972, therefore, expenditures have been estimated. The
method chosen[10] prescribes taking the actual dollar amount
spent in each quarter (1961-1971) and dividing it by the
implicit price deflator (1987 = 100) for the federal govern-
ment for the corresponding quarter (1961-1971). Actual dol-
lar figures were obtained from U.S. Department of Commerce
(1992, Table 1.1, 1-2). The price deflator was obtained from
U.S. Department of Commerce (1992, Table 7.14, line 12, 298-
299).

7. <u>Rate of change in per capita real disposable income</u>
(CINC) is the quarterly percent rate of change in per capita
real disposable income (see number 4 above).

Source: calculated by the author using a statistical
program; see footnote 7.

8. <u>Rate of change in per capita gross national product</u>
(CGNP) is the quarterly percent rate of change in per capita
gross national product (see number 5 above).

Source: calculated by the author using a statistical
program; see footnote 7.

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[10]As recommended by Mr. Carl Galbraith, an economist with
the U.S. Department of Commerce.

9. <u>Rate of change in per capita national defense</u> <u>expenditures</u> (CDEF) is the quarterly rate of change in per capita national defense expenditures (see number 6 above).

Source: calculated by the author using a statistical program; see footnote 7.

From the above variables we can now formulate our first equation:[11]

Economic Saliency (ECSAL) = a + b1(UNEMP) + b2(INFL) +
        b3(PRIME) + b4(INC) + b5(GNP) + b6(DEF) + b7(CINC)
        + b8(CGNP) + b9(CDEF) + e

Nine hypotheses can now be tested:

H1: As the unemployment rate increases, economic saliency increases (b1 > 0).

H2: As the inflation rate increases, economic saliency increases (b2 > 0).

H3: As the prime lending rate increases, economic saliency increases (b3 > 0).

H4: As per capita real disposable income increases, economic saliency decreases (b4 < 0).

H5: As per capita gross national product increases, economic saliency decreases (b5 < 0).

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[11]For all equations in this paper, a = Y-intercept, b = slope, and e = error term.

H6:   As per capita national defense expenditures increase,
      economic saliency decreases (b6 < 0).

H7:   As the rate of change in per capita real disposable
      income increases, economic saliency decreases (b7 < 0).

H8:   As the rate of change in per capita gross national
      product increases, economic saliency decreases
      (b8 < 0).

H9:   As the rate of change in per capita national defense
      expenditures increases, economic saliency decreases
      (b9 < 0).

Our second intervening variable, presidential job
approval, will now be regressed on economic saliency. The
president's job approval rating will be measured by tracking
positive responses to a question frequently asked in
national opinion surveys.

Presidential job approval (APPROV) is the mean quar-
terly percent of those who cited approval when asked "Do you
approve or disapprove of the way _____ is handling his job
as president?" This question is asked very frequently; only
three quarters[12] have missing data (for a loss of six-
tenths of 1 percent). Responses to variations of the ques-
tion were not included nor were responses from polls which
did not utilize a sample of the general population. As was
the case for economic saliency, responses from interviews
which spanned two quarters were discarded.

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[12]Quarter/year: 3/1964, 3/1972, and 3/1976.

Source: all of the data are from Gallup surveys
(Edwards with Gallup 1990), except for the third quarter of
1972 which is from a poll conducted by the Opinion Research
Corporation.[13]

From presidential job approval and economic saliency we
formulate the equation:

Presidential Job Approval (APPROV) = a + b1(ECSAL) + e

We have one hypothesis to test:

H10: As economic saliency increases, presidential job
approval decreases (b1 < 0).

To complete the test of our theory we will now regress
our three dependent variables--the number of press confer-
ences held, the number of foreign affairs speeches given
(three categories), and the number of days spent traveling
abroad, on presidential job approval. The following will
describe each dependent variable.

1. Presidential press conferences (PRESS) is the number
of press conferences held each quarter by the president.

Source: data for Kennedy through Carter are from the
series The Cumulated Indexes to the Public Papers of the
Presidents of the United States. Data for Ronald Reagan were
provided by Staff, Reagan Library (1990).

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[13]The figure was provided by Mr. Rob Turson, Roper Center,
in a telephone conversation.

2. <u>Foreign affairs speeches</u> given by the president are recorded quarterly in three categories: (1) major, (2) secondary, and (3) total, or the sum of major and secondary. The following will describe the coding process.

As a starting point we begin with, and then expand upon, the definitions developed by Lammers (1982), Ragsdale (1984, 1987), and Simon and Ostrom (1989). For our purposes a speech is any address given by the president which is one thousand words or more in length. This is roughly two pages of single-spaced text. However, to avoid eliminating an important speech which is less than one thousand words, flexibility and contextual analysis are required. For example, President Johnson's televised address to the nation on August 4, 1964 announcing that U.S. military forces would respond to attacks in the Gulf of Tonkin was much less than one thousand words, but was included in our data set. To have omitted this speech, or similar speeches of national importance, would have harmed our data base.

Speeches made by the president, whether required (i.e., the State of the Union) or discretionary, may affect the opinions people hold. Nationally televised or not, when a president speaks publicly some segment of the population will be affected and the message will be carried by some part of the news media. For these reasons all speeches made by the president, regardless of location or level of media attention, are considered.

A major foreign affairs speech (MFAS) is defined as any speech, or part thereof, which concerns diplomacy, summitry, treaties, executive agreements, national defense matters (including troop deployments), and crises, and is given either before a live television audience, a joint session of Congress, a press conference,[14] a nominating convention, an international body (i.e., the Organization of American States), or a foreign government (i.e., the British Parliament). The speech, or part thereof, must address at least one foreign affairs issue or problem.

A secondary foreign affairs speech (SFAS) is defined as having the same content, but not given before a live television audience, the Congress, at the beginning of a press conference, at a nominating convention, or before an international body or foreign government.

Total foreign affairs speeches (TFAS) is defined as the sum of all major and secondary speeches.

Because our theory could not predict which of these three categories of speeches would demonstrate the best relationship, each will be tested. For now, total foreign affairs speeches will be used in our equations.

Source: for all presidents we will utilize the series Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States which

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[14]If a prepared address given by the president at the beginning of a press conference meets the aforementioned requirements, then it is counted as a speech and included in our data set.

compiles all of the presidents' speeches, press conferences, and executive agreements, etc.

   3. <u>Presidential travel abroad</u> (TRAV) is the number of days each quarter that the president or president-elect is traveling outside the United States.

   Source: U.S. Department of State (1990).[15]

   From our dependent and intervening variables we can now formulate three equations with corresponding hypotheses for testing. To reiterate, we theorize that when presidential job approval decreases, presidents will give fewer press conferences, give more foreign affairs speeches, and spend more time traveling abroad.

Presidential Press Conferences (PRESS) = a + b1(APPROV) + e

H11: As presidential job approval increases, presidential
     press conferences increase (b1 > 0).
     And,

Total Foreign Affairs Speeches (TFAS) = a + b1(APPROV) + e

H12: As presidential job approval increases, total foreign
     affairs speeches decrease (b1 < 0).
     And,

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   [15]Several scholars have used the indexes to the <u>New York Times</u> for this variable, but the indexes understate the true number of days presidents have spent traveling abroad.

Presidential Travel Abroad (TRAV) = a + b1(APPROV) + e

H13: As presidential job approval increases, presidential travel abroad decreases (b1 < 0).

We now address the two competing hypotheses presented in the introduction. First, rather than avoid economic matters as theorized presidents may forthrightly address a declining economy. Therefore, we will introduce a dependent variable which measures the number of economic affairs speeches given by the president (three categories) and regress it on presidential job approval.

Economic affairs speeches given by the president are recorded quarterly and in three categories: (1) major, (2) secondary, and (3) total, the sum of major and secondary. The following will describe the coding process.

The codes for these speeches are major (MEAS), secondary (SEAS), and total (TEAS). The reasons for three categories and their definitions are the same as those for foreign affairs speeches except, of course, where content is concerned. An economic speech concerns cost of living, inflation, unemployment, recession, and the trade deficit, among others. These are broad problems and are meant to coincide with the responses to the "most important problem" survey question previously discussed. The speech, or part thereof, must address at least one economic affairs issue or problem.

Source: we will utilize the series <u>Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States</u>.

For the present total economic affairs speeches will be used in our equation. We now have the following equation and hypothesis to test:

Total Economic Affairs Speeches (TEAS) = a + b1(APPROV) + e

H14: As presidential job approval increases, the number of total economic affairs speeches decreases (b1 < 0).

The second competing hypothesis states that when the nation is involved in war presidents will give more speeches which concern foreign affairs and devote more time to foreign travel because of the national and international attention the military conflict will generate. Therefore, a variable which measures the presence or absence of war will be introduced and added to two of our previous equations.

<u>War</u> (WAR) measures whether the armed forces of the United States are engaged in combat; 1 = yes, 0 = no. The following criteria are used to define combat: (1) the event lasts at least five days, (2) live fire occurs between U.S. armed forces and an enemy, and (3) the event is not solely an evacuation. The reader is referred to Appendix A for a list of events which meet these criteria.

Source: Congressional Research Service (1989, 1992) and Clodfelter (1992).

We now have two additional hypotheses to test:

Total Foreign Affairs Speeches (TFAS) = a + b1(APPROV) +
    b2(WAR) + e

H15: When war is present, the number of total foreign
    affairs speeches increases (b2 > 0).
    And,

Presidential Travel Abroad (TRAV) = a + b1(APPROV) +
    b2(WAR) + e

H16: When war is present, presidential travel abroad
    increases (b2 > 0).

    Two other areas of inquiry will now be considered.
First, do foreign affairs speeches and foreign travel
increase during presidential election years, regardless of
economic conditions? We now introduce a new variable.

    Presidential election year (ELEC) denotes whether a
presidential election year is present; 1 = yes, 0 = no. The
presidential election years are 1964, 1968, 1972, 1976,
1980, 1984, and 1988. If we restricted this variable to
incumbent presidents who had served a full term and who had
sought re-election, then only three presidents would have
qualified: Nixon (1972), Carter (1980), and Reagan (1984).
Generalizations made from three cases would be untenable.

The following equations and hypotheses are now considered:

Total Foreign Affairs Speeches (TFAS) = a + b1(ELEC) + e

H17: In a presidential election year, the number of total foreign affairs speeches increases (b1 > 0).
     And,

Presidential Travel Abroad (TRAV) = a + b1(ELEC) + e

H18: In a presidential election year, presidential travel abroad increases (b1 > 0).

Our second area of interest is whether presidents increase their pursuit of major foreign policy initiatives in either economic downturns or presidential election years. A new dependent variable, major foreign policy initiatives, will be introduced and tested. It is necessary to create this new variable because the variable major foreign policy speeches (MFAS) does not suffice. Many foreign policy speeches coded as "major" do not announce or propose actions taken or to be taken by the United States in the areas of foreign or military affairs. It is this characteristic which is of interest now.

Major foreign policy initiatives (MFPOL) are speeches made by the president which announce or propose a signifi-

cant initiative or action in either foreign or military affairs. These are recorded quarterly. The reader is referred to Appendix B for a list of initiatives.

Source: the list of initiatives was developed by using the rally events compiled by Brody (1984, Table 1, 43) and the speeches and documents recorded in the series <u>Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States</u> (United States, President 1961-1989).

The first test involves regressing major foreign policy initiatives (MFPOL) on our nine economic variables. The following equation and hypotheses are developed.

Major Foreign Policy Initiatives (MFPOL) = a + b1(UNEMP) +
    b2(INFL) + b3(PRIME) + b4(INC) + b5(GNP) + b6(DEF) +
    b7(CINC) + b8(CGNP) + b9(CDEF) + e

H19: When the unemployment rate increases, major foreign
    policy initiatives increase (b1 > 0).
H20: When the inflation rate increases, major foreign policy
    initiatives increase (b2 > 0).
H21: When the prime lending rate increases, major foreign
    policy initiatives increase (b3 > 0).
H22: When per capita real disposable income increases, major
    foreign policy initiatives decrease (b4 < 0).
H23: When per capita gross national product increases, major
    foreign policy initiatives decrease (b5 < 0).

H24: When per capita national defense expenditures increase,
major foreign policy initiatives decrease (b6 < 0).

H25: When the rate of change in per capita real disposable
income increases, major foreign policy initiatives
decrease (b7 < 0).

H26: When the rate of change in per capita gross national
product increases, major foreign policy initiatives
decrease (b8 < 0).

H27: When the rate of change in per capita national defense
expenditures increases, major foreign policy initia-
tives decrease (b9 < 0).

Our next test involves regressing major foreign policy
initiatives on the variable presidential election year. The
following is presented.

Major Foreign Policy Initiatives (MFPOL) = a + b1(ELEC) + e

H28: When a presidential election year is present, major
foreign policy initiatives increase (b1 > 0).

Several additional variables were created which were
helpful during the recording of the data and they may prove
useful for future research.

Year (YR) -- a four-digit number.

Quarter (QTR) -- 1 = first, 2 = second, 3 = third, 4 =
fourth.

A dummy variable was created for each president: JFK (John F. Kennedy), LBJ (Lyndon B. Johnson), RMN (Richard M. Nixon), GRF (Gerald R. Ford), JEC (Jimmy E. Carter), and RWR (Ronald W. Reagan). Quarters which were shared by two presidents are coded for missing data.[16]

The reader is referred to Appendix C for a complete list of variables and their codes.

Whether some variables should be tested for lagged effects is a methodological dilemma. With regards to one area of presidency research--economic effects on presidential popularity--the following is considered.

In their study of economic performance and presidential popularity, Norpoth and Yantek found that:

> The evidence. . . .is too mixed to support a lag structure for either inflation or unemployment. (Norpoth and Yantek 1983, 796)

In a separate study, Norpoth found that a

> . . . tentative specification of the influence of economic performance on presidential popularity includes a contemporaneous effect for both unemployment and inflation, as well as a one-quarter lagged effect for inflation. (Norpoth 1984, 262)

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[16]The fourth quarter of 1963 was shared by presidents Kennedy and Johnson because Kennedy was assassinated. The third quarter of 1974 was shared by presidents Nixon and Ford due to the resignation of Nixon. So that the actions of two presidents would not be combined in the same quarter, the following variables which concern presidential behavior are coded for missing data for the aforementioned quarters: presidential press conferences, presidential travel abroad, major foreign affairs speeches, secondary foreign affairs speeches, total foreign affairs speeches, major economic affairs speeches, secondary economic affairs speeches, total economic affairs speeches, major foreign policy initiatives, war, and presidential job approval.

Norpoth found no lagged effects for unemployment.

Based on the findings of Norpoth and Yantek (1983), Brace and Hinckley (1991) avoided lagged effects and, as noted in the review of literature, still found significant economic effects (i.e., the misery index) on presidential popularity. Ostrom and Simon (1989), in their evaluation of popular support for President Reagan, reported that unemployment had a significant impact on public evaluations and that it was "over eight times greater than that of inflation" (p.378).

Obviously, the findings are mixed. Yet, there were some significant results when a lagging function was utilized. Citizens may not necessarily react immediately to a declining economy, rather, they may reflect on their (or the country's) economic situation for a short while before their anger or disappointment is projected upon the president or other political institutions. Conversely, present opinions may be affected by past conditions and events. Lagging is an appropriate methodological tool for assessing or measuring these types of behaviors and this tool is utilized in the present study.

We have twelve equations with a total of 28 hypotheses. Several methodological procedures will now be restated for clarity. Both foreign affairs and economic affairs speeches have been divided into three categories--major, secondary, and total. Each will be tested because we could not predict

which category would demonstrate the best relationship with our other variables. Similarly, we will test both the levels and the percent rates of change in per capita real disposable income, per capita gross national product, and per capita national defense expenditures.

The data for this study constitute a time series and they are recorded on a quarterly basis. When appropriate the mean for each quarter is used. Quarterly data are common in econometric models because they tend to smooth the data points. This should soften the effects of occasionally large variations within some variables. Since this study is concerned with patterns of behavior over a period of nearly three decades the significance of any one event is unimportant.

Monetary variables have been standardized in 1987 dollars and the consumer price index is standardized as 1982-84 = 100.

When a president is leaving office in January his speeches, press conferences, etc. for January are not included in the data for the first quarter; only data for the new president are recorded.

A SAS[17] statistical program (release 6.08) will be utilized for analyzing the data. The PROC REG routine calculates ordinary least squares (OLS) estimates. When a lag-

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[17]SAS is a registered trademark of SAS Institute Inc., Cary, NC.

ging function is needed the PROC AUTOREG routine will be used. The latter uses OLS for the linear component and the Yule-Walker method (generalized least squares) for the autoregressive component of the models.

Our tables present data for several statistics: the unstandardized parameter estimates (b), the standard errors (s.e.), the probabilities (p-values), which are one-tailed tests,[18] the R-square statistic, the Durbin-Watson statistic for autocorrelation,[19] and sample size (N).

The following chapter will present the results from the various regressions. Chapter 5 will discuss the conclusions drawn from our analysis.

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[18]Our variables are significant when the p-values are <= .05.

[19]Ideally, the Durbin-Watson statistic should be 2; however, there is a range about this numeral which is acceptable. To determine whether the Durbin-Watson statistics from our regressions fell in the acceptable range, Table VIII, Critical Points of the Durbin-Watson Test for Autocorrelation, was used as a reference (see Wonnacott and Wonnacott 1979, 544).

CHAPTER IV
RESULTS

Before the results of the regressions are presented we
report that there are significant levels of multicollinear-
ity among our nine economic variables (see Appendix D for a
correlation matrix). In a regression framework unemployment
is the strongest explanatory variable for economic saliency
(r= 0.84). The inflation rate also significantly affects
economic saliency (r= 0.50) and it (inflation) does not
correlate with unemployment (r= 0.07).

Our first model (see methodology chapter) regresses the
variable economic saliency on nine economic indicators.
Because economic saliency has a small sample size (N= 58),
the number of regressors must be limited. Therefore, we will
first regress economic saliency on six economic indicators
while omitting the three variables which measure the percent
rates of change in per capita real disposable income, per
capita GNP, and per capita national defense expenditures
(Model I, Table 1). Our second regression will include the
three change variables, but omit per capita real disposable
income, per capita GNP, and per capita national defense
expenditures (Model II, Table 1).

Table 1. Regression of Economic Saliency
On Nine Economic Indicators

Variable	MODEL I b,(s.e.)	MODEL II b,(s.e.)	MODEL III b,(s.e.)
Intercept	-62.232 (40.189)	-55.586 (6.821)	-33.238 (22.106)
Unemployment	13.179 *** (1.985)	14.049 *** (1.150)	12.106 *** (1.374)
Inflation	7.447 ** (3.198)	11.972 *** (2.387)	9.253 *** (2.189)
Prime Rate	0.339 (0.697)	-0.201 (0.659)	
Income	-0.011 (0.011)		0.0009 (0.001)
GNP	0.010 (0.009)		
Defense	-0.019 * (0.011)		-0.017 * (0.010)
Change Inc		-0.209 (1.826)	
Change GNP		-0.616 (1.616)	
Change Def		0.748 (0.642)	
R-square	0.87	0.86	0.87
Durbin-Watson	1.44	1.52	1.47
N	58	58	58

*   P <= .05, one-tail
**   P <= .01, one-tail
*** P < .001, one-tail

Table 2. Regression of Economic Saliency On
          Nine Economic Indicators, Continued

Variable	MODEL IV b,(s.e.)	MODEL V b,(s.e.)	MODEL VI b,(s.e.)
Intercept	-25.412 (19.376)	-58.341 (6.067)	157.468 (7.263)
Unemployment	12.591 ** (1.205)	14.064 ** (0.897)	14.034 ** (1.098)
Inflation	9.517 ** (2.152)	12.165 ** (1.590)	11.642 ** (1.930)
Defense	-0.018 * (0.010)		
R-square	0.87	0.86	0.87
Durbin-Watson	1.46	1.42	2.04
N	58	58	57

* P <= .05, one-tail
** P < .001, one-tail

From Model I we see that unemployment, inflation, and per capita national defense expenditures are significant and their signs are in the correct direction. The Durbin-Watson statistic (1.44) indicates the presence of autocorrelation. And in our second test (Model II), only unemployment and inflation are significant. Again, the Durbin-Watson statistic indicates autocorrelation (1.52).

Per capita real disposable income is highly correlated with per capita GNP (r= 0.99). To test whether per capita real disposable income would become significant if per capita GNP was omitted, per capita real disposable income was added to a model with unemployment, inflation, and per cap-

ita national defense expenditures (Model III). Per capita
real disposable income did not reach significance, however
(p-value= 0.22).

From Models I, II, and III we see that unemployment,
inflation, and per capita national defense expenditures sig-
nificantly affect economic saliency. Per capita national
defense expenditures are highly correlated with unemployment
(r= -0.60) and inflation (r= -0.60). Model IV regresses eco-
nomic saliency on unemployment, inflation, and per capita
national defense expenditures. All three variables are sig-
nificant and the R-square is 0.87 (Durbin-Watson= 1.46).

Model V omits per capita national defense expenditures.
Both unemployment and inflation remain very significant, and
the R-square (0.86) and Durbin-Watson statistic (1.42) are
almost identical to those in Model IV. It is now evident
that per capita national defense expenditures should be
excluded from our final model because it does not add any
significant explanatory power.

Now that we have specified the correct model we must
correct for autocorrelation. Model VI regresses the variable
economic saliency on unemployment and inflation with a lag
of one quarter. The Durbin-Watson statistic is now in the
acceptable range (2.04). Our parameter estimates remain very
significant and the R-square statistic changed very little.

We report that for each 1 percent increase in unemploy-
ment, economic saliency increases 14 percentage points and,

for each 1 percent increase in inflation, economic saliency
increases by roughly 12 percentage points. The effects are
delayed one quarter. Together, unemployment and inflation
explain most of the variance of economic saliency (R-square=
0.87).

Two of our research hypotheses are accepted. First, as
the unemployment rate increases, economic saliency increases
(H1) and second, as the inflation rate increases, economic
saliency increases (H2). We do not reject the null hypoth-
eses for the remainder (H3 through H9).

Our next model (Table 3) regresses presidential job
approval on economic saliency. From Model I we see that
economic saliency is significant and the sign is in the
correct direction. The Durbin-Watson statistic (0.83) indi-
cates significant autocorrelation, however. From Model II we
see that lagging one quarter eliminated the autocorrelation
problem. The Durbin-Watson statistic increased to 1.90,
which is in the correct range. The variable conomic sal-
iency remained significant and the sign is in the correct
direction. Also note that the R-square statistic increased
from 0.16 to 0.52.

Our final model (Model II) shows that, for each 1 per-
cent increase in economic saliency, presidential job
approval decreases by 0.11 percentage points. Or, for each
ten point increase in economic saliency, presidential job
approval will decrease roughly 1 percentage point. The

effect is delayed one quarter. We accept our hypothesis that when economic saliency increases, presidential job approval decreases (H10).

Table 3. Regression of Presidential Job
Approval On Economic Saliency

Variable	MODEL I b,(s.e.)	MODEL II b,(s.e.)
Intercept	59.069 (2.887)	57.420 (3.469)
Ec. Saliency	-0.158 ** (0.049)	-0.117 * (0.061)
R-square	0.16	0.52
Durbin-Watson	0.83	1.90
N	55	54

*   P <= .05, one-tail
** P <= .001, one-tail

Before we present the remaining regressions, we should first determine whether unemployment and/or inflation have direct affects on presidential job approval (see Table 4). Model I regresses presidential job approval on economic saliency, unemployment, and inflation (with one lag to correct for autocorrelation). We see that inflation is significant (p-value= 0.001), while economic saliency and unemployment are not. When presidential job approval was regressed on just economic saliency and inflation (one lag), only

inflation was significant again (p-value < .001). The p-value for economic saliency was 0.15.[1]

The reason economic saliency became insignificant in the two previous regressions is that when this variable is placed on the right side of an equation with unemployment and/or inflation, multicollinearity ensues. Economic saliency is highly correlated with both unemployment (r= 0.84) and inflation (r= 0.50), therefore, we will remove this variable and continue our tests for direct affects.

Model II regresses presidential job approval on unemployment and inflation (with two lags to correct for autocorrelation). Again, only inflation is significant (p-value= 0.003). From Model III, which regresses presidential job approval on just inflation (with two lags to correct for autocorrelation), we see that for each one point increase in inflation, presidential job approval decreases 3.2 percentage points. In Models II and III inflation accounts for a significant portion of the variance in presidential job approval (R-square= 0.73).

We have presented evidence which shows that unemployment and inflation indirectly affect presidential job approval through economic saliency, and that inflation directly affects presidential job approval. No direct effects from unemployment were found. Our final model (see Figure 2, chapter 5) will depict both paths.

_____

[1]This regression is not shown.

Table 4. Regression of Presidential Job Approval on Economic Saliency, Unemployment and Inflation

Variable	MODEL I b,(s.e.)	MODEL II b,(s.e.)	MODEL III b,(s.e.)
Intercept	62.639 (8.787)	63.934 (6.170)	57.246 (2.151)
Ec. Saliency	-0.062 (0.111)		
Unemployment	0.133 (1.815)	-1.100 (0.941)	
Inflation	-6.474 *** (2.015)	-3.255 ** (1.172)	-3.274 ** (1.176)
R-square	0.51	0.73	0.73
Durbin-Watson	1.78	1.89	1.86
N	54	104	104

```
*    P <= .05,  one-tail
**   P <  .01,  one-tail
*** P <= .001, one-tail
```

The final tests of our theory necessitates the regression of presidential press conferences, foreign affairs speeches (three categories), and presidential travel abroad on presidential job approval. We begin with presidential press conferences.

Table 5 presents results from three regressions of the variable presidential press conferences on presidential job approval. In Model I, presidential job approval is significant and the sign is in the correct direction, but autocorrelation is present (Durbin-Watson= 0.85). Lagging one

quarter (Model II) and two quarters (Model III) greatly improved the Durbin-Watson statistics, but presidential job approval lost significance in both models. The p-values increased to 0.08 (Model I) and to 0.12 (Model II). We therefore reject the hypothesis that when presidential job approval increases, presidential press conferences increase (H11).

Table 5. Regression of Presidential Press Conferences
On Presidential Job Approval

Variable	MODEL I b,(s.e.)	MODEL II b,(s.e.)	MODEL III b,(s.e.)
Intercept	0.595 (1.200)	1.124 (1.696)	1.512 (1.724)
Job Approval	0.051 ** (0.022)	0.042 (0.030)	0.035 (0.030)
R-square	0.04	0.36	0.37
Durbin-Watson	0.85	2.12	2.00
N	107	106	105

* P <= .05, one-tail
** P <= .01, one-tail

Next we regressed our three categories of foreign affairs speeches on presidential job approval. We begin with major speeches. Major foreign affairs speeches was not significant even when lagged one and two quarters. The lowest p-value reached for presidential job approval was 0.11 at two lags. Both secondary and total foreign affairs speeches

were significant and they yielded almost identical results. However, autocorrelation was present in both models.

Table 6 presents the results of secondary foreign affairs speeches (Model I) and total foreign affairs speeches (Model II) regressed on presidential job approval; both models are lagged once. Presidential job approval is significant in both models and the signs are in the correct direction. The Durbin-Watson statistics are in the proper range as well.

Because the results for the two models are nearly identical, and because total foreign affairs speeches combines two categories, secondary foreign affairs speeches will be chosen for our final model.

Table 6. Regression of Foreign Affairs Speeches
On Presidential Job Approval

Variable	MODEL I b,(s.e.)	MODEL II b,(s.e.)
Intercept	20.373 (4.655)	21.898 (4.906)
Job Approval	-0.180 ** (0.085)	-0.163 * (0.089)
R-square	0.13	0.13
Durbin-Watson	2.04	2.05
N	106	106

* P <= .05, one-tail
** P <= .01, one-tail

From Model I we see that for each 1 percent increase in presidential job approval, secondary foreign affairs speeches decrease by 0.18 per quarter (approximately one-fifth of one speech). Or, for each 10 percent increase in presidential job approval, secondary foreign affairs speeches decrease roughly two per quarter (this finding will be addressed in the concluding chapter). We accept the hypothesis that when presidential job approval increases, (secondary) foreign affairs speeches decrease (H12).

Lastly, we regressed presidential travel abroad on presidential job approval. From Table 7 we see that presidential job approval is significant and that the sign is in the correct direction. The Durbin-Watson statistic (2.20) is also in the acceptable range. For each 1 percent increase in presidential job approval, presidential travel abroad decreases by 0.06 days (less than two hours) per quarter. We accept the hypothesis that when presidential job approval increases, presidential travel abroad decreases (H13). We will address the significance of this finding later.

The next phase of our analysis concerns the two competing hypotheses. First, presidents may choose to address a poor economy in their public speeches rather than avoid it. We now regress our three categories of economic affairs speeches on presidential job approval.

Table 7.   Regression of Presidential Travel
           Abroad On Presidential Job Approval

Variable	MODEL I b,(s.e.)
Intercept	6.839 (2.095)
Job Approval	-0.063 * (0.038)
R-square	0.02
Durbin-Watson	2.20
N	107

* P <= .05, one-tail

From Model I, Table 8 we see that major economic
affairs speeches is significant, but the sign is positive,
which is in the wrong direction. Lagging one and two quar-
ters did not reverse the sign.

When secondary economic affairs speeches was regressed
on presidential job approval (Model II), the variable was
significant and the sign was in the correct direction, but
autocorrelation was present (Durbin-Watson= 0.99). Lagging
one and two quarters improved the Durbin-Watson statistic,
but our levels of significance increased to 0.07 in both
regressions.

Model III regresses total economic affairs speeches on
presidential job approval. The sign is in the correct
direction, but presidential job approval did not reach our

significance level (p-value= 0.08) and lagging one and two quarters increased the p-values to 0.10 in both regressions. Our hypothesis (H14), therefore, is not accepted; economic affairs speeches do not increase when presidential job approval decreases.

Table 8. <u>Regression of Economic Affairs Speeches On Presidential Job Approval</u>

Variable	MODEL I b,(s.e.)	MODEL II b,(s.e.)	MODEL III b,(s.e.)
Intercept	0.130 (0.489)	21.461 (5.738)	21.591 (5.783)
Job Approval	0.020 ** (0.009)	−0.169 * (0.105)	−0.149 (0.106)
R-square	0.04	0.02	0.01
Durbin-Watson	1.96	0.99	0.98
N	107	107	107

* P <= .05, one-tail
** P <= .01. one-tail

Our second competing hypothesis concerns whether either foreign affairs speeches (three categories) or presidential travel abroad, when regressed on presidential job approval, increase when war is present. We added the variable war to the right side of our previous equations.

We first address the regressions of three categories of foreign affairs speeches on presidential job approval and war. Rather than present the reader with multiple tables, suffice it to say that the variable war did not become sig-

nificant in any of our regressions. Even when lagged one and two quarters, the p-values for war did not go below 0.20. We therefore reject the hypothesis that when war is present, the number of foreign affairs speeches increases (H15).

We had similar results when we regressed presidential travel abroad on presidential job approval and war. The p-value for war was not significant (0.08) and lagging was unsuccessful (p-value= 0.07 at one lag and 0.08 at two lags). We reject the hypothesis that when war is present, presidential travel abroad increases (H16), and we conclude this section by reporting that none of our competing hypotheses were accepted.

We now address our two remaining areas of research interest. First, do either foreign affairs speeches (three categories) or presidential travel abroad increase in a presidential election year?

We begin with foreign affairs speeches. When major foreign affairs speeches was regressed on presidential election year, presidential election year was not significant (p-value= 0.23). Lagging increased the p-value to 0.27 at one lag and to 0.28 at two lags.

We then regressed secondary (Model I) and total (Model II) foreign affairs speeches on the variable presidential election year (Table 9). The parameter estimates and p-values for presidential election year are nearly identical in both models and the signs are in the correct direction.

Because the results are similar, and because total speeches combines two categories, we select secondary foreign affairs speeches for the final model.

Table 9. Regression of Foreign Affairs Speeches On Presidential Election Year

Variable	MODEL I b,(s.e.)	MODEL II b,(s.e.)	MODEL III b,(s.e.)
Intercept	8.500 (0.874)	10.878 (0.911)	8.284 (1.144)
Election YR	8.714 ** (1.734)	9.014 ** (1.806)	9.542 ** (2.014)
R-square	0.18	0.18	0.26
Durbin-Watson	1.38	1.33	2.05
N	110	110	109

* P <= .05, one-tail
** P < .001, one-tail

Secondary foreign affairs speeches (Model I) must be corrected for autocorrelation (Durbin-Watson= 1.38). Model III regresses secondary foreign affairs speeches on presidential election year with a lag of one quarter. The variable election year remained significant, the sign is in the correct direction, and the Durbin-Watson statistic (2.05) is in the correct range. From the data presented in Model III, we now construct the following equation:

Secondary Foreign Affairs Speeches = a + b1(Election YR)
                                   = 8.28 + 9.54(1)
                                   = 17.82

From our equation we calculate that in a presidential election year there are approximately 18 secondary foreign affairs speeches given by the president per quarter; in non-presidential election years the number is approximately 8 per quarter $[8.28 + 9.54(0)]$. The increase in secondary foreign affairs speeches as a result of a presidential election year being present is roughly ten per quarter. Because we have a lag of one quarter, the effect is demonstrable only in the second, third, and fourth quarters of the election year. We therefore accept the hypothesis that in a presidential election year, the number of (secondary) foreign affairs speeches increases (H17).

Second, we regressed the variable presidential travel abroad on presidential election year. The p-values for presidential election year did not go below 0.14 even when lagged one and two quarters and the sign in all three regressions was negative, which was in the wrong direction. We reject the hypothesis that in a presidential election year, presidential travel abroad increases (H18).

Our last area of inquiry concerns major foreign policy initiatives. We desire to know whether major foreign policy initiatives increase when the economy is performing poorly or when a presidential election year is present.

First, we regressed the variable major foreign policy initiatives on our nine economic variables. From Model I,

Table 10, we see that only the p-values for unemployment and the percent rate of change in per capita GNP are significant; however, using the entire model for explanatory purposes would be inelegant. Regardless, autocorrelation is present (Durbin-Watson= 1.71).

The p-value for per capita real disposable income is nearly significant (0.06) and this variable is highly correlated with per capita GNP (r= 0.99). Per capita real disposable income may become significant when regressed with unemployment and the percent rate of change in per capita GNP (see Model II). Model III regresses major foreign policy initiatives on just unemployment and the percent rate of change in per capita GNP; the latter are the two variables from Model I which are significant.

From Table 10 we see that none of the variables in Models II and III reached our significance level. Lagging was not fruitful, though the Durbin-Watson statistics did improve. We conclude that the number of major foreign policy initiatives does not change as a result of declining economic conditions, and we do not reject our null hypotheses (H19-H27).

Lastly, we regressed major foreign policy initiatives on the variable presidential election year. Presidential election year was not significant (p-value= 0.20) and lagging caused our p-values to slightly increase. We reject the

Table 10. <u>Regression of Major Foreign Policy</u>
<u>Initiatives On Nine Economic Indicators</u>

Variable	MODEL I b,(s.e.)	MODEL II b,(s.e.)	MODEL III b,s.e.)
Intercept	-2.374 (2.081)	0.673 (0.444)	0.406 (0.286)
Unemployment	0.202 * (0.106)	0.060 (0.051)	0.038 (0.044)
Inflation	-0.055 (0.178)		
Prime Rate	-0.031 (0.038)		
Income	-0.0009 (0.0005)	-0.00003 (0.00004)	
GNP	0.0007 (0.0004)		
Defense	0.0001 (0.0005)		
Change Inc	0.138 (0.094)		
Change GNP	-0.214 ** (0.096)	-0.078 (0.072)	-0.073 (0.072)
Change Def	-0.006 (0.030)		
R-square	0.07	0.02	0.01
Durbin-Watson	1.71	1.67	1.66
N	109	109	109

* P <= .05, one-tail
** P <= .01, one-tail

hypothesis that major foreign policy initiatives increase in a presidential election year (H28).

This concludes the regression of our models. The following chapter will present the conclusions drawn from the foregoing analysis, discuss their implications, and present suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER V
CONCLUSIONS

The results from our regressions lead to a modification of our theory of presidential behavior (see Figure 2). We found that unemployment and inflation are important economic indicators for the public. When either unemployment or inflation increases, economic saliency increases. This saliency is recorded through a modification of the responses to the "most important problem" question asked in national opinion surveys. This new variable measures the attitude quite well, though the delay (lag) is one quarter. A short delay in the processing of economic information by the public seems reasonable, however, and is supported by previous research on the presidency (see review of literature and below).


```
                                                    Travel
                                                    Abroad
Unemployment                                        Increases
Increases ──→    Economic         Presidential
                 Saliency ---> Job Approval ──→
Inflation ──→    Increases        Decreases        Secondary
Increases                                           Foreign
          └─────────────────────────────┘          Affairs
                                    ↑               Speeches
                                                    Increase
```
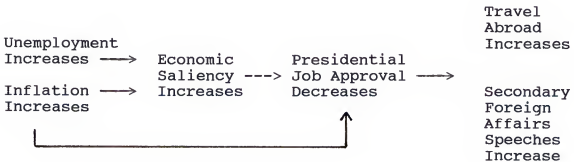
Figure 2. _Modified Behavioral Model_

When the public's level of economic saliency goes up, its collective attitude concerning the president goes down (with a delay of one quarter). This attitude is measured by responses to the "presidential job approval" question frequently asked in national opinion surveys. This finding offers evidence to support the belief held by many politicians and political scientists that the public holds the president accountable for poor economic conditions (see, for example, Nixon 1962, Tufte 1978, and Norpoth 1984).

In the present study economic saliency is an intervening variable between unemployment, inflation, and presidential job approval. Unemployment and inflation indirectly affect presidential job approval through economic saliency, and inflation also directly affects presidential job approval. These relationships are analogous to findings reported in previous research. With regards to the variable presidential job approval, both Monroe (1978) and Norpoth (1984) found lagged effects for inflation, and Fiorina (1981) confirmed the relationship (non-lagged) with unemployment. Both of these economic indicators (non-lagged) were reported by Frey and Schneider (1978) and Shapiro and Conforto (1980a) to significantly affect presidential job approval. And, when unemployment and inflation were combined into a "misery index" it, too, significantly affected presidential job approval (Ostrom and Simon 1985, Brace and Hinckley 1991).

We subsequently discovered that when presidential job approval decreases, presidents will increase their time spent traveling abroad and increase the number of secondary foreign affairs speeches given (the latter with a delay of one quarter), though the increases for both variables were quite small. The relationship between presidential job approval and presidential travel abroad supports the findings of Darcy and Richman (1988); however, our results are irrespective of political party.

A judgment must be made regarding the importance of the latter two findings. If presidents consciously increase their attention to foreign affairs in their speeches and increase the number of days spent traveling abroad as methods for improving their standing in public opinion polls and their electoral chances, then we would expect to see increases which reasonable people would agree were substantial. It is difficult to conclude that an increase of 0.06 days of foreign travel per quarter and 0.18 secondary foreign affairs speeches per quarter, for each one point decrease in presidential job approval, would produce the desired effect.[1] It seems unlikely that the public would notice such small changes in presidential behavior. This conclusion may support the research of Simon and Ostrom

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[1]For the entire data set the mean number of days per quarter that the president spends traveling abroad is 3.37. Similarly, the mean number of secondary foreign affairs speeches is 10.71 per quarter.

(1989). They reported that it is approval-enhancing events, not speeches or foreign travel, which positively affects presidential popularity.

Contrary to our theory, and to the findings reported by Lammers (1981), we found no relationship between presidential press conferences and presidential job approval. Lammers had found that when presidential popularity decreased, presidential press conferences increased.

None of our competing hypotheses were accepted. Economic affairs speeches did not increase when presidential job approval decreased, and neither foreign affairs speeches nor presidential travel abroad were affected by the presence of war. We conclude this section by stating that insufficient evidence exists to support our theory that presidents attempt to divert the nation's attention to foreign affairs when the economy is performing poorly.

Regarding our remaining areas of research interest, we found that (secondary) foreign affairs speeches increased in presidential election years, though presidential travel abroad did not. Apparently, presidents are inclined to remain at home during a presidential election year to devote their energies to the campaign.

Surprisingly, major foreign policy initiatives did not increase as a result of poor economic conditions nor did they increase in presidential election years. It may be that presidents believe that economic conditions are foremost in

the minds of the American public and that attempts to increase their own popularity or electoral chances through foreign affairs speeches, foreign travel, or major foreign policy initiatives would be fruitless.

We will now address the significance of the finding that secondary foreign affairs speeches increase by ten per quarter during a presidential election year. Some may argue that the increase is not due to greater attention to foreign affairs by presidents in presidential election years, but the result of a general increase in speechmaking while presidents are on the campaign trail. One method of testing this assertion is to regress our three categories of economic affairs speeches on the variable presidential election year and compare the results.

Presidential election year was not significant when regressed with major economic affairs speeches (p-value= 0.09). Table 11 presents results from the regressions of secondary and total economic affairs speeches on presidential election year.

From Model I (secondary economic affairs speeches) and Model II (total economic affairs speeches) we see that presidential election year is significant and the signs are in the correct direction. The results for both regressions are nearly identical and autocorrelation is present. In keeping with our previous decision-making processes, secondary economic affairs speeches is chosen for our final model.

Model III presents the regression of secondary economic affairs speeches on presidential election year, but with a lag of one quarter. The variable is significant, the sign is in the correct direction, and autocorrelation has been corrected (Durbin-Watson= 2.21).

Table 11. <u>Regression of Economic Affairs Speeches On Presidential Election Year</u>

<u>Variable</u>	MODEL I <u>b,(s.e.)</u>	MODEL II <u>b,(s.e.)</u>	MODEL III <u>b,(s.e.)</u>
Intercept	9.048 (1.277)	10.207 (1.281)	8.665 (1.746)
Election YR	13.415 ** (2.531)	13.792 ** (2.539)	14.960 ** (2.969)
R-square	0.20	0.21	0.30
Durbin-Watson	1.31	1.28	2.21
N	110	110	109

```
*    P <= .05,  one-tail
**   P <  .001, one-tail
```

From the data presented in Model III, Table 11, we create the following equation:

```
Secondary Economic Affairs Speeches = a + b1(Election YR)
                                     = 8.66 + 14.96(1)
                                     = 23.62
```

We calculate that, in a presidential election year, there are approximately 24 secondary economic affairs

speeches given by the president per quarter. In non-presidential election years the number of speeches is approximately nine per quarter [8.66 + 14.96(0)]. The increase in secondary economic affairs speeches as a result of a presidential election year being present is roughly 15 per quarter. Because the variable is lagged one quarter, the effect is demonstrable only in the second, third, and fourth quarters of the election year. It seems reasonable to infer that the increase in secondary foreign affairs speeches can be attributed to a general increase in speechmaking by presidents during the political campaign (presidential election year).

From Table 12 we see that presidents give greater attention to economic affairs in their speeches during the election year. This may be due to the importance voters place on economic conditions (especially unemployment and inflation) when they evaluate the president's job performance and when deciding whom to vote for in the general election. This additional piece of evidence supports our previous findings and speculations.

Table 12. **Comparison of the Presidents' Speeches In Non-presidential Election Years and Presidential Election Years**

Type of Speech	Non-presidential Election Years	Presidential Election Years	Increase
For. Affairs	8 per qtr.	18 per qtr.	10 (125%)
Econ. Affairs	9 per qtr.	24 per qtr.	15 (166%)

In the present study we have reported that unemployment and inflation matter greatly to the American public. These two economic variables affect economic saliency, which in turn affects presidential job approval. Previous research has shown that presidential job approval affects the president's electoral chances (Sigelman 1979, Lewis-Beck and Rice 1982) and his party's chances in congressional elections (Kernell 1977, Campbell 1985).

We have shown that increases in presidential job approval are not associated with increases in foreign travel and foreign affairs speeches. Rather, presidential approval declined as the latter two variables increased. And, presidents do not increase the number of major foreign policy initiatives when the economy is performing poorly or during presidential election years.

Regarding economics and foreign affairs, it is evident that presidents would be wise to devote greater attention to economic affairs since these are obviously the issues foremost in the minds of the public. The problem for the chief executive, however, is that the number of tools at his disposal for correcting a declining economy is quite small and in most cases he must rely on the cooperation of Congress or the bureaucracy or the Federal Reserve Board. Additionally, we found that the number of economic speeches given by the president does not affect presidential job approval. It may

be that actual economic conditions matter greatly to the public, while rhetoric does not.

From our analyses two topics for future research are suggested. First, we found that unemployment and inflation account for most of the variance (R-square= 0.87) in economic saliency and that economic saliency accounts for a substantial portion of the variance (R-square= 0.52) in presidential job approval. Researchers should focus on an explanation for the remaining variance in presidential job approval.[2] Possible explanatory variables include personality or charisma, crises, scandals, and treatment by the media.

Second, what <u>can</u> presidents do to improve their job approval ratings? Greater attention to foreign affairs and foreign travel is obviously not the answer because our results show that increases in foreign affairs speeches and foreign travel are associated with decreases in presidential job approval. We also reported that presidents do not attempt to initiate major foreign policy when the economy is slumping. Yet, even if presidents did increase the number of major foreign policy initiatives, the results from the regressions of foreign affairs speeches on presidential job approval suggest that an increase in the number of major

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[2]When presidential job approval was regressed just on inflation, the R-square was 0.73.

foreign policy initiatives would also be associated with a decrease in presidential job approval.

The evidence from this study suggests that economic affairs are more important than foreign affairs to the American public. Specifically, presidents should attempt to keep the unemployment and inflation rates as low as possible. Although administrations may attempt to enlarge the incomes of individuals and families by increasing transfer payments (see Tufte 1978), success greatly depends upon cooperation from others within the political structure. More importantly, these transfer payments do not decrease unemployment or inflation. In fact, additional payments could fuel inflation. And, as previously mentioned, attempts to increase presidential job approval through policy successes in Congress may be unsuccessful (see Bond and Fleisher 1984, Zeidenstein 1985).

If unemployment and inflation cannot be controlled, a president may have to wait for an economic slump to work itself out or for fate to present him with a potential rally event close to the election and hope for a positive response from the public. In either case, the president is at the mercy of uncontrollable forces. Political scientists should conduct research for the purpose of discovering which types of behavior, situations, or events will increase presidential popularity.

This research project has presented the results of an investigation into nearly thirty years of presidential behavior; however, we have analyzed the actions of only six presidents--a rather small study group to generalize from. If institutions have memories and precedent is a guiding force, then we would expect that, at least for the near future, presidents will continue to behave like their predecessors in similar situations. Yet, we know that what appears to be politically conventional today is often tomorrow's discarded theory.

APPENDIX A
WAR[1]

EVENT	START DATE (qtr/yr)	END DATE (qtr/yr)
Vietnam	4/1961	1/1973
Lebanon	3/1982	1/1984
Persian Gulf	3/1987	3/1988

Events whose dates overlapped those recorded were discarded. For example, the U.S. invasion of Grenada occurred in the fourth quarter of 1983, which overlaps the Lebanon conflict. Since the variable measures only the presence or absence of war, several military conflicts are not listed here.

There is disagreement as to when the Vietnam war began and ended, but an explanation is in order for the dates chosen. U.S. military advisors had been in Vietnam through-out the 1950s. In December of 1961 two U.S. Army helicopter companies were deployed to South Vietnam, hence the reason

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[1]Data for this appendix are from Congressional Research Service (1989, 1992) and Clodfelter (1992).

why the fourth quarter of 1961 was chosen as the start date.
Many scholars have elected August of 1964 as the start date
because this was when the Gulf of Tonkin crisis occurred and
when President Johnson responded with heavy bombing. The
following data show why August 1964 may be inappropriate.

Table 13. <u>Vietnam War Statistics</u>

	1961	1962	1963	1964
U.S. troop strength in Vietnam	3,164	11,326	16,263	23,310
Killed	11	31	78	147
Air sorties	----	2,334	6,929	5,362

(Source: Clodfelter 1992, 1229)

The first quarter of 1973 is chosen as the end date
because "by March 29 the last of the 24,200 U.S. servicemen
remaining in South Vietnam had been withdrawn" (Clodfelter
1992, 1276).

APPENDIX B
MAJOR FOREIGN POLICY INITIATIVES[1]

Kennedy

1-30-61   Reappraise entire defense structure; fight cold
           war.

4-20-61   Discusses Bay of Pigs events.

5-17-61   Strengthening of North Atlantic Treaty Organiza-
           tion (NATO).

5-25-61   New defense requests for military assistance; new
           attempts at disarmament.

9-25-61   Plan for disarmament; end of nuclear testing;
           situations in Laos and West Berlin.

3-2-62   Resumption of nuclear testing.

4-18-62   Plan for disarmament.

10-22-62   Quarantine of Cuba.

7-26-63   Nuclear test-ban treaty.

[total: 9]

Johnson

8-4-64   Forces respond to attacks in Gulf of Tonkin.

4-7-65   Statement of Vietnam policy.

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[1]Sources consulted: Brody (1984) and United States, Pres-
ident (1961-1989).

5-2-65   U.S. forces sent to the Dominican Republic.

5-4-65   Request for $700 million for the defense of Viet-
          nam and the Dominican Republic.

1-31-66   Resumption of bombing in Vietnam.

3-31-68   De-escalating the Vietnam conflict.

6-12-68   U.S. will sign nuclear non-proliferation treaty.

6-13-68   Consular convention signed by the U.S. and the
          U.S.S.R.

7-1-68   Signing of nuclear non-proliferation treaty.

10-31-68 Halts bombing of North Vietnam.

[total: 10]

<u>Nixon</u>

5-14-69   Outline of peace proposal for Vietnam.

11-24-69 Signing of non-proliferation of nuclear weapons
          treaty.

3-5-70   Ratification and entry into force of the non-
          proliferation of nuclear weapons treaty.

4-20-70   Withdrawal of 150,000 troops from Vietnam.

4-30-70   New military initiatives against the communists in
          Cambodia and Vietnam.

10-7-70   New peace proposal for Vietnam.

7-15-71   Announcement of diplomatic invitation to China.

1-25-72   Peace plan for Vietnam.

2-10-72   Itinerary for China trip.

5-8-72   Mining of North Vietnam's harbors.

5-19-72   Announcement of trip to the U.S.S.R.

1-23-73   Peace agreement with North Vietnam.

[total: 12]

Ford

3-6-75   Assistance to Cambodia and Vietnam.

5-15-75   Concerning SS Mayaguez and rescue of her crew.

5-28-76   Treaty with the U.S.S.R. regarding underground
           nuclear explosions.

[total: 3]

Carter

8-12-77   Agreement in principle on Panama Canal treaties.

9-7-77   Signing of Panama Canal treaties.

9-8-77   United States-Canada agreement on the natural gas
           pipeline.

10-4-77   Pledges to use nuclear weapons only defensively;
           decrease the number of nuclear weapons.

3-10-78   Signing of nuclear non-proliferation agreement.

4-7-78   Deferment of the production of neutron weapons.

9-17-78   Camp David accords signed.

12-15-78   Diplomatic relations with China established.

3-26-79   Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty signed.

6-18-79   Signing of SALT II (Strategic Arms Limitation
           Talks).

1-4-80   Sanctions against the U.S.S.R. for invading
           Afghanistan; delay of ratification of SALT II.

4-7-80   Sanctions against Iran.

4-25-80   Failed rescue of American hostages in Iran.

9-17-80   New agreements with China.

[total: 14]

<u>Reagan</u>

10-1-81   Sale of aircraft (AWACs and F15s) to Saudi Arabia.

5-9-82   Proposal for arms reductions.

8-20-82   Troops to deploy to Lebanon.

10-9-82   Sanctions against Poland.

11-22-82   Proceeding with the MX missile.

3-23-83   Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) proposed.

3-30-83   Proposal to reduce nuclear forces.

10-4-83   New START (Strategic Arms Reduction Talks) initi-
           atives.

10-25-83   Deployment of forces to Grenada.

4-4-84   Proposal to ban chemical weapons.

5-1-85   Economic sanctions against Nicaragua.

11-14-85   Concerning U.S.- U.S.S.R. summit in Geneva.

1-7-86   Economic sanctions against Libya.

4-14-86   Airstrikes against Libya.

12-8-87   Signing of Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF)
           treaty with the U.S.S.R.

3-11-88   Sanctions against Panama.

3-16-88   Troops to be deployed to Honduras.

4-18-88   Military confrontations with Iran.

6-4-88   Concerning the INF and START talks with the Soviet
           Union.

[total: 19]
Grand total: 67

YR	Year
QTR	Quarter
ELEC	Presidential Election year
JFK	John F. Kennedy
LBJ	Lyndon B. Johnson
RMN	Richard M. Nixon
GRF	Gerald R. Ford
JEC	Jimmy E. Carter
RWR	Ronald W. Reagan
PRESS	Presidential Press Conferences
TRAV	Presidential Travel Abroad
MFAS	Major Foreign Affairs Speeches
SFAS	Secondary Foreign Affairs Speeches
TFAS	Total Foreign Affairs Speeches
MEAS	Major Economic Affairs Speeches
SEAS	Secondary Economic Affairs Speeches
TEAS	Total Economic Affairs Speeches
MFPOL	Major Foreign Policy Initiatives
WAR	War
APPROV	Presidential Job Approval

ECSAL	Economic Saliency
PRIME	Prime Lending Rate
UNEMP	Unemployment Rate
INFL	Inflation Rate
INC	Per Capita Real Disposable Income
GNP	Per Capita Gross National Product
DEF	Per Capita National Defense Expenditures
CINC	Percent Rate of Change in Per Capita Real Disposable Income
CGNP	Percent Rate of Change in Per Capita Gross National Product
CDEF	Percent Rate of Change in Per Capita National Defense Expenditures

APPENDIX D
CORRELATION MATRIX WITH NINE ECONOMIC VARIABLES
(Pearson's r)

	PRIME	UNEMP	INFL	GNP	DEF
PRIME	1.00	0.49	0.62	0.63	-0.56
UNEMP	0.49	1.00	0.07	0.41	-0.60
INFL	0.62	0.07	1.00	0.38	-0.60
GNP	0.63	0.41	0.38	1.00	-0.59
DEF	-0.56	-0.60	-0.60	-0.59	1.00
INC	0.64	0.50	0.34	0.99	-0.62
CINC	-0.23	-0.10	-0.30	-0.13	0.12
CGNP	-0.35	-0.07	-0.29	-0.09	0.12
CDEF	0.21	0.17	0.01	0.16	0.02

	INC	CINC	CGNP	CDEF
PRIME	0.64	-0.23	-0.35	0.21
UNEMP	0.50	-0.10	-0.07	0.17
INFL	0.34	-0.30	-0.29	0.01
GNP	0.99	-0.13	-0.09	0.16
DEF	-0.62	0.12	0.12	0.02
INC	1.00	-0.12	-0.11	0.16
CINC	-0.12	1.00	0.43	-0.08
CGNP	-0.11	0.43	1.00	0.08
CDEF	0.16	-0.08	0.08	1.00

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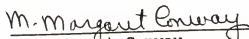
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Joseph K. Smaha was born and raised in Portland, Maine. He earned a B.A. in political science from the University of Southern Maine in 1979, an M.A in political science from Boston College in 1983, and a Ph.D. in political science from the University of Florida in 1994.

Mr. Smaha's master's thesis is entitled <u>Education and the New Federalism</u> and is a study of the effects of the Reagan administration's education policies on the public school system of Portland, Maine.

Mr. Smaha was a student senator at the University of Southern Maine from 1978-1979 and served as president of the Political Science Graduate Student Association at the University of Florida from 1992-1993. He is a member of the American Political Science Association, and the Center for the Study of the Presidency.

Mr. Smaha is married to the former Katherine M. Bavelaar of Milo, Maine. They have two children, Sara Michelle and Christopher James. His parents are the late Joseph K. and Teresa A. Smaha and he has one sibling, Terri A. Manship.

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.
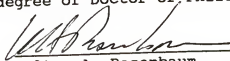
M. Margaret Conway
Professor of Political Science

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Wayne L. Francis
Professor of Political Science

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.
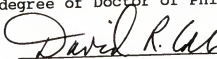
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Leslie P. Thiele
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I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

David R. Colburn
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This dissertation was submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Department of Political Science in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and to the Graduate School and was accepted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

August 1994

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Dean, Graduate School